



WHAT DO POLITICIANS DO ON *TWITTER*? FUNCTIONS AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE SPANISH ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN OF 2016

¿Qué hacen los políticos en *Twitter*?
Funciones y estrategias comunicativas en la
campaña electoral española de 2016



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Abstract

Twitter has been incorporated as an essential tool in the communication strategies of political actors. However, we need to know more about its use. Our objective is to analyze the main functions attributed to *Twitter* in electoral campaigns. We studied the 2016 election in Spain based on an analysis of quantitative content. The sample consists of 9,042 tweets, published by the four parties that received the most votes and their candidates. The results show: First, the most widely used

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function was the dissemination of political proposals. Second, a low level of personalization was detected. Third, there was an incipient tendency towards hybridization between new and conventional digital media in the use of this platform. Finally, it was shown that the functions given to *Twitter* are conditioned, in different ways, by three factors: the historical trajectory of the party, its position on the government-opposition line, and the individual or collective dimension.

Keywords

Political communication; Electoral campaigns; Social media; Social networking sites; *Twitter*; Personalization; Hybridization; Digital media.

Resumen

Twitter se ha incorporado como un canal imprescindible en las estrategias comunicativas de los actores políticos. Sin embargo, necesitamos saber más sobre su uso. Nuestro objetivo es analizar las principales funciones atribuidas a *Twitter* en campaña electoral. Para ello, mediante el análisis de contenido cuantitativo se estudian las elecciones de 2016 en España. Integran la muestra 9.042 tweets, publicados por los cuatro partidos más votados y sus candidatos. Los resultados muestran: Primero, la función más usada es la difusión de sus propuestas políticas. Segundo, se detecta un bajo nivel de personalización. Tercero, se observa una tendencia incipiente hacia la hibridación entre los nuevos medios digitales y los convencionales en el empleo de esta plataforma. Finalmente, se demuestra que las funciones otorgadas a *Twitter* se ven condicionadas por tres factores de manera diversa: la trayectoria histórica del partido, su posición en el eje gobierno-oposición y la dimensión individual o colectiva.

Palabras clave

Comunicación política; Campaña electoral; Medios sociales; Redes sociales; *Twitter*; Personalización; Hibridación; Medios digitales.

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1. Introduction

Politicians have incorporated *Twitter* as an essential tool in their communication strategies and use it intensely during election campaigns. Since the U.S. elections of 2008, marked by Barack Obama's victory, the influence of these digital platforms on political communication has continued to grow in all advanced democracies (Bimber, 2014). However, apart from the theoretical possibilities they allow, we need to know more about the practical use that parties and political leaders have given to social media. A considerable amount of past research has focused on analyzing the reasons for adopting *Twitter*, the extent to which adoption takes place, and the subjects that politicians tackle in this network (Grusell; Nord, 2012; Enli; Skogerboe, 2013; Graham; Jackson; Broersma, 2016). However, less attention has been paid to the functions attributed to the platforms as part of the communication strategies of the parties and their leaders. An investigation into this topic will allow us to learn about the changes that these technologies are introducing, both in the management of political communication and in today's societies.

The aim of this article is to analyze the main functions that politicians assign to *Twitter* in the electoral context. We intend to find out what they do on this social media platform and what the implications are for political communication. To do this, we will use a methodology based on analyzing quantitative content to study the 2016 election campaign in Spain. The sample consists of the four most popular parties and their respective candidates, which together, received 89.95% of the votes.

1.1. Functions of *Twitter* in an election campaign

In the past several years, the use of social media in election campaigns has been studied (Aragón et al., 2013; Jungherr, 2014). The bibliography initially has identified some of the functions that parties and their candidates use to communicate with the public (Parmelee; Richard, 2012). The key function is the dissemination of policy statements and information about campaign activities (Jackson; Lilleker, 2011). There is a predominance of self-referencing in social media that manifests itself, for example, when candidates announce their participation in rallies or provide their own links (Criado; Martínez-Fuentes; Silván, 2013).

“The use of *Twitter* is conditioned by three factors: historical trajectory of the party; position in the government-opposition axis; and the individual or collective dimension of the political agent who issues the messages”

Parties and their leaders also use *Twitter* to mobilize voters and encourage participation (Gainous; Wagner, 2014). This function translates into specific requests for users to attend campaign events, work together as volunteers, make economic donations, and vote.

Interaction with the public is another important feature. *Twitter* offers candidates the possibility of establishing two-way communication between politicians and citizens,

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although it is important to note that there is insufficient evidence to prove that this actually occurs (Stromer-Galley, 2014; Alonso-Muñoz; Marcos-García; Casero-Ripollés, 2017). Although there are exceptions, there is limited interaction on *Twitter* (Alonso-Muñoz; Miquel-Segarra; Casero-Ripollés, 2016). In some countries, politicians interact more with other politicians and journalists than with the people (Graham *et al.*, 2013).

Another function that *Twitter* provides is personalization, which is connected to the loss of privacy. Politicians share details of their private lives, thoughts, and emotions (Vergeer; Hermans; Sams, 2013). This function helps to humanize candidates in the eyes of their social audience (Bentivegna, 2015). To gain empathy from voters, some politicians use an informal tone and humor (López-Meri, 2016). They also like to share images, which stimulated more comments and retweets than political statements (Enli; Skogerbø, 2013).

Politicians intensify their use of social media during election campaigns (Abejón-Mendoza; Sastre-Asensio; Linares-Rodríguez, 2012). When users are exposed to messages from candidates their impression of the candidates tends to improve (Hamby, 2013). Therefore, the functions ascribed to *Twitter* take on key roles during these periods.

This leads to our first research question (RQ):

RQ1: What were the most prominent functions in the communication strategies of the Spanish parties and candidates on *Twitter* in the 2016 election?

The following hypothesis is proposed in relation to this question:

H1: The dominant function in the 2016 election was the dissemination of information about public policies.

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“The use of *Twitter* to spread political proposals is based on a double strategy: self-referential messages posted in a positive tone that are complemented by criticisms of the adversary”

1.2. Personalization of politics

The personalization of politics focuses the discourse on individuals rather than parties (Rahat; Sheaffer, 2007). This promotes the candidate's attributes and downplays the importance of ideologies as a differentiating factor between parties, which reduces politics to a clash of personalities (Sánchez-Murillo, 2005).

Mainstream media, especially television, has been the key to personalization (Blumler; Kavanagh, 1999). The parties simplify their speech to reach a mass audience (Holtz-Bacha, 1999), thus adapting to audio-visual language and media logic. For this reason, the mediatization of politics (Mazzoleni; Schulz, 1999) drives the personalization process (Rodríguez-Virgili; Jandura; Rebolledo-de-la-Calle, 2014).

The parties have also contributed to this phenomenon by

featuring a leader's personality over his ideology to capture votes (Farrell, 1996). Personalization can take shape in two dimensions: individualization and privacy (Van-Aelst; Sheaffer; Stanyer, 2012). The first, individualization, articulates the communication strategy around the candidate (McAllister, 2007). The second, privacy, emphasizes the politician's personal side. His hobbies, his family life, and even his appearance are more interesting than his leadership skills and his role as an institutional representative (Reinemann; Wilke, 2007). Personalization can also be negative when criticisms of the political rival are focused on its leader and not on the party and its values and ideology (Elmelund-Præstekær; Mølgaard-Svensson, 2014).

Social media also allow for personalization, when politicians make an individualized and personal use of these platforms. In this regard, another of the qualities of digital networks that drives this phenomenon is the ability to address the people directly, and thus get much closer to them (Kruikemeier *et al.*, 2013; López-García, 2016).

This leads to the possibility of asking a second question in our research:

RQ2: To what extent did Spanish parties and politicians tend to personalize the 2016 election on *Twitter*?

This leads us to the following hypotheses:

H2: There was a high degree of personalization in the 2016 election campaign on *Twitter* thanks to this platform's ability to promote an individualized use and connect politicians directly to the people.

1.3. Old and new media logic

Hybridization in political communication means combining the potential of the digital environment with the logic of mainstream media (Chadwick, 2013). Politicians are not abandoning or replacing traditional tools and tactics. They are enriching them with the new dynamics and possibilities offered by social media (Casero-Ripollés; Feenstra; Tormey, 2016). These platforms provide new ways to participate in political activity (Castells, 2009).

The symbiosis between old and new media logics can be seen in events such as the televised election debates, which recorded the highest number of retweets and comments (Anstead; O'Loughlin, 2011). The peaks in activity on *Twitter* coincided with the broadcast of political content via mainstream media (Larsson, 2016). This implies that *Twitter* expands the scope of media coverage of events in the campaign (Lilleker; Jackson, 2010).

There is a third question in our research regarding this matter:

RQ3: To what extent did parties and candidates promote the hybridization of old and new media on *Twitter* in the 2016 election?

In this respect, the following is assumed:

H3: The parties and their candidates used *Twitter* to promote their appearances in mainstream media during the 2016 election, stimulating hybridization between old and new media.

2. Methodology

The methodology is based on an analysis of quantitative content, a technique that allows one to have an objective and systematic understanding of the content of the messages analyzed Piñuel-Raigada, 2002; (Igartua, 2006). The sample for this research focuses on the election campaign for the general elections in Spain on the 26th of June, 2016. This analysis is conducted on the 15 official days of the election campaign, followed by the day of reflection, the day of voting, and the day afterwards. During this period, we study all the tweets published by the *Partido Popular* (the *Popular Party*, or *PP*), the *Partido Socialista* (*Socialist Party*, or *PSOE*), *Podemos*, and *Ciudadanos* (*C's*); and their respective candidates, Mariano Rajoy, Pedro Sánchez, Pablo Iglesias, and Albert Rivera. Thus, we analyze a total of 9,042 tweets.

The choice of these four political parties and their leaders meets two criteria. On the one hand, they were the four most popular political choices in the 2016 election and, together, they represented 89.95% of the votes. On the other hand, these are politicians with clearly differentiated trajectory. While *PP* and *PSOE* are the two parties with the longest histories in the Spanish political system, *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos* are two emerging parties. This allows us to compare the strategies of two parties that represent traditional politics with two linked to new politics.

The sample data have been extracted using the Tweepy tool. The statistical treatment of the results was done using SPSS (v.23). Intercoder reliability was calculated with Scott's Pi formula, reaching a level of 0.97.

Table 1 shows the analysis protocol used for this research. A number of variables were created for this, and mutually exclusive categories were defined for each of them.

3. Results

The results of the analysis of the tweets published by parties and leaders identify the main functions given to *Twitter* (RQ1).

Proposal of public policies

The first significant finding is that, other than Pablo Iglesias, all of the political actors used this social networking platform mainly to provide information about their proposals and their election program (Table 2). The *PP* (39.5%) and the *PSOE* (37.3%), as well as their leaders, Mariano Rajoy (32.4%) and Pedro Sánchez (22.1%), used it in a very similar way and devoted a third of their tweets to this function. *Ciudadanos* and Albert Rivera also agreed when it came to prioritizing the program proposals in their *Twitter* speeches, since they were present in 41% and 14.6% of their tweets, respectively. *Podemos* and Iglesias, on the other hand, made unequal use of *Twitter*. The party devoted 31.1% of its messages to its electoral program and proposes. However, the leader only did it in 6.9% of messages.

The strategy for disseminating public policy proposals was reinforced with two other complementary functions. The first was community building based on values and ideology (table 2). The Spanish parties and their leaders devoted part of their publications to extolling and strengthening their values as political parties, with tweets in which they used the rhetoric, language, and symbolism directly related to their political ideology. *Podemos* (12.9%) and *Ciudadanos* (7.4%) along with Iglesias (6.9%) and Rivera (6.8%), as the representatives of the new politics, were the ones who used this function the most, with discourses focused on the ideas of 'change' and 'political regeneration'. This dynamic is explained by the fact that they were political actors who had little experience, so they needed to open up and consolidate

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Table 1. Analysis protocol used in the research

Function		Tweets content
Political agenda (organization of political events)		Information about campaign events (place, time, etc.).
Program/promises		Including part of the program or election proposals.
Political achievements of management/opposition		Praise the achievements of the party and/or the leader.
Criticism of the adversary		Direct attacks on the actions and/or the ideology of other parties or politicians.
Media agenda (media information)		Links to the media, for example, to share an interview or discussion in which the leader or another member of the party took part.
Interaction/dialogue with users		The party or leader responds to or asks another user by using the mention (@).
Participation and mobilization		Asking for votes, donations, or the mobilization of voters or volunteers.
Community building	Values and ideology	Extol and enhance the values and ideology of the party.
	Personal life / backstage	Aspects of the private lives of politicians (hobbies, tastes, family, etc.), which show a more humane and personal attitude, or which show aspects of the campaign backstage (meetings, travel, etc.).
	Entertainment	Reaching users through entertainment.
Humor		Including memes, jokes, and other humorous resources.
Courtesy/protocol		Appreciation, condolences, anniversaries, etc.
Other		Content that cannot be classified in any of the above categories.

Table 2. Function of the tweets published by the parties and their leaders (%)

	PP	Rajoy	PSOE	Sánchez	Podemos	Iglesias	C's	Rivera
Agenda and organization of political actions	7.5	17.0	1.4	9.3	9.2	7.9	5.6	10.7
Electoral Program	39.5	32.4	37.3	22.1	31.1	6.9	41.1	14.6
Management of political achievements	12.0	6.9	5.6	2.8	6.7	3.0	4.8	2.9
Criticizing opponents	14.2	2.8	26.7	18.1	21.9	5.0	21.7	13.6
Media agenda (media information)	4.8	1.6	2.2	5.0	2.4	7.9	4.4	11.7
Interaction/dialogue with users	1.3	6.0	1.5	7.8	1.4	25.7	1.7	12.6
Participation and mobilization	11.5	20.1	14.5	17.4	9.0	9.9	7.6	10.7
Community building: values and ideology	5.1	3.5	9.3	4.7	12.9	6.9	7.4	6.8
Community building: personal life /backstage	0.8	2.5	0.0	4.0	1.3	11.9	2.3	3.9
Community building: entertainment	0.7	0.6	0.1	0.9	0.4	3.0	0.0	1.0
Humor	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.1	5.9	0.0	0.0
Manners/protocol	1.0	6.0	0.4	6.9	2.6	7.9	1.5	11.7
Other	1.4	0.3	0.8	0.6	1.0	1.0	1.7	0.0

a new space for communicate their policies in opposition to the traditional parties and leaders, who were already known by the electorate. With respect to the established parties, only the *PSOE* (9.3%) was noted for giving prominence to the party's values.

The second complementary function was criticism (Table 2), as both parties and leaders used *Twitter* as a way of attacking their political opponents. This function was especially used in the profiles of the parties in opposition to the Government led by *Partido Popular* (People's Party). The *PSOE* devoted 26.7% to criticism, *Podemos* 21.9%, and *Ciudadanos* 21.7%. Regarding the candidates, while Sánchez (18.1%) and Rivera (13.6%) emphasized the use of this function, Iglesias included it in only 5% of his tweets. *PP* (14.2%) and Rajoy (2.8%), as representatives of the Government, reduced the use of *Twitter* to criticize other parties and exploited it as a channel for praising and highlighting their own achievements (12% and 6.9%, respectively).

This strategy of criticism was, in most cases, conducted through negative personalization. Attacks were aimed at rival leaders (Image 1) and concentrated on accusations directed to debilitate both them and their political proposals. This personalization also contributed, from a negative viewpoint, to constructing the parties' and the candidates' political offerings on *Twitter*.

The results show that criticisms usually focused on Mariano Rajoy and on his mandate as president (Image 1). This fact shows that the position of the political actor was a determining factor when it was negatively personalized. Any party that governs, without refusing to attack, is geared more to extolling its own achievements. On the other hand, the parties in opposition prioritized criticizing the government to discredit it.

Citizens' participation and mobilization

The second most widely used function of *Twitter* was participation and mobilization, which included tweets asking for votes, calling for donations, or urging people to participate in campaign events (Table 2). Rajoy (20.1%) and Sánchez (17.4%), leaders of *PP* and *PSOE*, respectively, engaged the most in this function. In contrast, the lowest values were detected for *Ciudadanos* (7.6%) and *Podemos* (9%). The established parties, especially their candidates, were the ones who used this function most, explicitly for canvassing. Emerging politicians used it less, and when they did, they just asked their followers to attend rallies and campaign events.

Personalization

The use of social media as a mechanism of personalization was limited in the 2016 election (Table 2). It was significant only in the case of Pablo Iglesias, the only candidate who made personal use of *Twitter* (RQ2). The strategy followed



Image 1. Tweets criticizing the management of Mariano Rajoy¹
Source: *Twitter*



Image 2. Most retweeted tweet of the campaign²
Source: Twitter



Image 3. Most retweeted tweets of the parties³
Source: Twitter

by the leader of *Podemos* seemed to be aimed at reaching a direct and close relationship with the people who he interacted with. In fact, 25.7% of his tweets were answers or questions to other users within his social network. Iglesias's discourse was also notable for including matters relating to his private life. In 11.9% of his tweets, he shared his tastes, interests, feelings, and emotions.

In Iglesias' account was also common to use jokes and humorous resources (5.9%) such as memes or photomontages. The item with the most retweets (8,054) in the entire election campaign was a tweet from Pablo Iglesias in which he joked about his bonding with the leader of *Izquierda Unida*, Alberto Garzón, and his communist ideology (Image 2).

These data show how *Twitter* can bolster political spectacle and infotainment. Personal issues and humorous messages are what most attract the users' attention (Berrocal-Gonzalo; Redondo-García; Campos-Domínguez, 2012).

‘The predominant role attributed to *Twitter* by all political actors, except in the case of Pablo Iglesias, is the dissemination of political proposals that are part of their electoral program’

Hybridization between new and old media

The results show that there was a hybridization between new and old media in the use of *Twitter* by politicians. Data relating to the category of ‘media agenda’, which includes tweets that publicized the involvement of politicians on television or in digital newspapers or news links, show a moderate but incipient use of this function. Pablo Iglesias (7.9%) and Albert Rivera (11.7%) were the two leaders who exploited this medium the most (Table 2). A very different dynamic from the one followed by Mariano Rajoy (1.6%) and Pedro Sánchez (5%), who hardly used this type of content in their profiles. The parties also did not make much use of this function; they used it between 2% and 5%.

The candidates of the emerging parties were those who employed this strategy of hybridization the most. *Twitter* acted as a tool through which the leaders of the new politics sought to enhance their media projection. This fact reaffirms the importance mainstream media continue to have during election campaigns, even in the digital environment (Case-ro-Ripollés; Feenstra; Tormey, 2016).

It is worth noting how these hybridization-based messages had a positive impact on the public. Of the five tweets shared by the parties that achieved the most retweets, two alluded to the television debate between the four candidates held on the 13th of June, 2016 and broadcast by several channels –specifically, the golden minute of Iglesias and an intervention of Rajoy (Image 3).

4. Conclusions

The results contain several original contributions that are applicable beyond Spain, thereby increasing knowledge of the functions *Twitter* provides politicians in the context of electoral campaigning:

- The first is the prominence acquired by dissemination of their political proposals and the importance attached to getting people to participate and mobilize.
- The second is the low degree of personalization of politics that was recorded in politicians' use of this digital platform.
- The third is the emerging trend toward hybridization between new digital media and mainstream media in online communications strategy, especially in the case of parties with a more recent emergence.

It is important to highlight that all these features of *Twitter* use are conditioned by three key factors:

- the history of the party;
- the position the party occupies in the government-opposition dynamics; and
- the individual or collective dimension of the political actor who broadcasts the messages.

The results show that the predominant role attributed to *Twitter* by all politicians, except Pablo Iglesias, was the dissemination of the policy proposals that they integrated into their electoral programs (RQ1). Hypothesis 1 was verified in this way. The possibility of addressing people directly, without the participation of journalists and the mainstream media, promoting auto-mediation, is based on the prevalence of this type of use of *Twitter*. The option of exercising mass self-communication that allows wide dissemination of policy proposals made politicians focus their efforts on this function. Its importance was such that their political trajectory had no impact on this use, boosted equally by established and emerging parties.

“Most of the Spanish parties and leaders do not publish tweets that show aspects of their personal lives”

The use of *Twitter* to broadcast policy proposals was based on a double strategy:

- On the one hand, messages were published with the measures put forward in a positive tone. This was supplemented, in the case of parties linked to the new politics, with the distribution of tweets that highlighted their values and their ideology. This practice was used to emphasize the novelty of what these emerging parties are offering politically: change and democratic regeneration.
- On the other hand, this strategy was complemented by criticizing their adversaries. This was based on negative personalization, as they focused the blame on the leaders of the rival parties. This dynamic depended on the position of the party and on the individual or collective dimension of the political actors. In this way, the opposition parties made a more intense use of reproaching their competitors than the Government (PP). Equally, accusa-

tions against opponents were more frequent in party profiles than in the leader's profiles.

Another prominent function is participation and mobilization (RQ1). Its activation depended, to a large extent, on the historical trajectory of the political actors. Contrary to what one might expect, the established parties made greater use of this function than the emerging ones. Moreover, while the former called explicitly for votes in their tweets, appealing to the logic of persuasion, the latter encouraged the people to be involved in the campaign, promoting the logic of mobilization. The individual or collective dimension also appeared as a determining factor, since leaders use this function more than the parties.

Contrary to what is envisioned by hypothesis 2, the results show a low level of personalization attributed to *Twitter* by politicians. With the exception of Pablo Iglesias, the other parties and candidates recorded very low use of tweets to publicize their personal lives and contribute to build a community of followers (RQ2). Unlike the findings in previous studies (Van-Santen; Van-Zoonen, 2010; Jackson; Lilleker, 2011; Parmelee; Bichard, 2012; Enli; Skogerbø, 2013), most parties and leaders in Spain rejected the idea of publishing tweets to display aspects of their private lives, which this way falls outside the media spotlight. Despite the limited use of this function, its use was determined by two factors:

- the individual or collective dimension of the political actors and,
- to a lesser extent, his historical trajectory.

As expected, the leaders had higher values than their parties. Meanwhile, the emerging parties resorted more to personalization on *Twitter* than the established parties.

This pattern was not followed by the *Podemos* candidate, who used some tweets to reveal aspects of his private life such as his tastes, interests, feelings, or emotions. He thus sought to humanize his image and get closer to the people (Enli; Skogerbø, 2013). He combined this with resorting to humor through jokes and memes to reinforce that connection. Thus, the function of personalization on *Twitter* takes on the characteristics of pop politics (Mazzoleni; Sfondini, 2009). This means that political actors incorporate into their communicative repertoires styles, narratives, and staging of the world of spectacle and entertainment. These results indicate that this phenomenon, which is more appropriate for television, is expanding out of its natural habitat and now also extends to the environment of social networks. Although in the Spanish case it only affects Pablo Iglesias, this trend can be a precursor and have a significant influence in the future in building up the image of the political leader in social media. This is an aspect that must be verified through further study.

Analysis of the functions granted to *Twitter* by parties and candidates during the 2016 election allowed us to detect the still incipient advancement of the hybridization of political communication (Chadwick, 2013) (RQ3). This focuses on the use of new digital platforms for establishing links with the mainstream media. This trend can connect with the category of 'media agenda' and partially verifies hypothesis 3. Thus, through their profiles on *Twitter*, politicians can publicize

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their participation on television shows via interviews or discussions, or their appearance on the news to maximize their impact. In this way, they can use a communication strategy that combines and mixes the old and new media in a complementary way. An analysis of this aspect allowed us to identify the important role that both the historical background of the political organizations and the individual or collective dimension had on its activation. Thus, political leaders resorted more to this function than the parties. Furthermore, actors who were linked to emerging parties resorted more intensely to this strategy than well-consolidated parties.

“There is a hybridization between new and old media in the use of *Twitter* by political agents

The focus on hybridization between old and new media by parties with less historical background can be explained in various ways:

- first, the need to achieve greater impact and projection in their appearances in mainstream media, especially on television. Since access to this media is less frequent for them than it is for the established parties, they seek to maximize profit from these moments;
- hybridization is used to achieve many retweets and ‘likes’ to ensure a double effect: to obtain better publicity and to become subjects of interest for the media due to the build up of a large audience;
- the emerging parties have their natural habitat on social networks sites but they are also aware of the importance of mainstream media in modern society and the need to connect old and new media (Casero-Ripollés; Feenstra; Tormey, 2016);
- parties want to take advantage of the ability of mainstream media to legitimize. For that reason, thanks to their appearances on media, they show themselves as a valid, acceptable, and reliable political option.

Finally, as has been said, the results show that the functions given to *Twitter* by politicians are conditioned by three factors:

- the history of the party;
- the position it occupies on the government-opposition dynamics;
- the individual or collective dimension of the actor.

The latter factor has a higher incidence since it influences the four most relevant functions discussed in this article:

- proposals of public policies;
- participation and mobilization of the people;
- personalization;
- hybridization between new and old media.

The parties’ adherence to the old or new policy, according to their age, affects this whole set of functions, with the exception of the formulation of policy proposals. Instead, position on the government-opposition axis is less predominant, since that determines only the spread of policy proposals. These findings constitute a novel contribution because they reveal various factors that condition political actors to focus more on one function or another on *Twitter*.

Notes

1. Pedro Sánchez:

“If the President-in-Office does not immediately stand down #FernandezDíaz, he will be responsible for the conduct of his minister”.

Podemos:

“We are not surprised about what Rajoy says. We are surprised about what Rajoy remains silent: inequality and poverty @Lucia___M #26JAdeuPP”.

2. Pablo Iglesias

“Pablo Casado’s friend has sent him this photo. He says that we are @agarzon and me arriving to the Congress of the Deputies”

3. *Podemos*:

“We share the golden minute of @Pablo_Iglesias_ #Debate13J”

Partido Popular:

“Rajoy refutes his opponents’ lies in 30 minutes @Debate13J”

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